

both too rigid and too ambiguous. A sceptic, for instance, may be one who rejects all beliefs, or only other people's; who thinks that truth has not yet been found, or that it cannot ever be. But the soul of Montaigne is a living butterfly; nothing that can be pinned down in a glass case is really he.

Thus, he distrusted and despised most convictions; yet he retained strong ones. How utterly he distrusted them stands most clearly written, not in his pages, perpetually as they repeat it, but on the rafters of his library in the tower which is all that fire has left today of his chateau of Montaigne. There he had inscribed half a hundred of his chosen mottoes (we may recall and contrast those in the house of Ronsard), mottoes, above all, that express an almost nihilistic exultation in human purblindness—*ou5fv opi^co* (I take no definite view); *ITT^XCO* (I suspend judgment); *dcKocTaATiTrco* (I do not commit myself); *dppsTrcos* (with nothing to choose either way); *TTOCVTI Aoycp A6yo\$* *tcro\$ dvTiKeiTcTt* (to every reason there is as good a counter-reason); *vae qui sapientes estis in oculis vestris* (woe to you that are wise in your own eyes); *neplus sapias quam necesse est ne obstupescas* (be no wiser than you must so as not to be paralysed); *IvSexeToci xod ofo fv8fxsrca* (it is possible and yet impossible); *ou uSAAov ourcos ix⁸¹ ^ HKefvcos* *fj ou8erfpcos\$* (*it is not more* this way than that way, *or* neither way). This room is the very shrine

of Doubt.
 The fence seems to Montaigne a pleasanter
 seat than any
 arm-chair. It is as if he felt the Universe
 capable of any-
 thing; and the human mind of nothing,
 except mares'-
 nests. There are passages in the *Essais* where
 he amasses
Iftises almost with the misanthropic
 exultation (though
 more impish and less enraged) of the author
 of *Bouvard*
and Ptcuchet, and with the same moral: *Il ne
 faut jamais
 conclure/ 'Ma maistresse forme est
 Tignorance*—*Il me